



BLM NEWS

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Bureau of Land Management
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Tom Gorey
(202) 452-5031

BLM Seeks Public's Ideas On Off-Highway Vehicle Use

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is seeking ideas and comments from the public on how best to ensure environmentally responsible off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on the public lands. The BLM will develop a strategy based on public input to address land-management issues prompted by the growing popularity of OHV use.

“We need the public’s help to find ways on how to keep pace with the growing use of OHVs, while conserving our natural resources,” BLM Director Tom Fry said. “We don’t have all the answers, and we’re hoping folks will help us develop reasonable guidance and direction. We need to focus our efforts towards on-the-ground solutions rather than tying up our scarce resources in litigation, protests, and appeals.”

The goal of the strategy is to provide local managers a framework for addressing issues such as current OHV designations, executive orders, regulations, trends in management and management approaches, route inventory needs, resource issues, special management and sensitive areas and resources, monitoring, education, law enforcement, and budget.

A critical piece of the national strategy development is public participation. The public can comment in a number of ways:

- An OHV mailer will be sent to people who contact the Bureau of Land Management at 1849 C Street N.W., LSB 406-C, Washington, D.C. 20240, Attn: Comment Manager, or by submitting electronic comments through the national website at <http://www.blm.gov>;
- Comments will also be gathered at local “listening meetings” which will be held by the BLM.

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BLM management of OHVs is guided by an Executive Order established in 1972, when only about five million OHVs were in use nationally. Today, that number has risen dramatically. In addition, technological advances now make it possible for these vehicles to travel over lands that were formerly inaccessible. Many of BLM's land use plans do not adequately address the increases in OHV use. In addition, BLM's budget-related resources -- including the number of recreation specialists and law enforcement personnel -- have not kept pace with the past decade's growth in OHV use. These factors, plus litigation over OHV management issues, have created the need for a national OHV management strategy.

Comments will be collected through August and will be analyzed and used to help create BLM guidance by November 30. Once the guidance is written, the BLM's next challenge will be to implement it locally with adequate resources and the help of public and private partners to achieve on-the-ground goals.

The BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages more land -- 264 million surface acres -- than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, which has a budget of \$1.4 billion and a workforce of about 8,700 employees, also administers more than 560 million acres of sub-surface minerals estate throughout the nation. The BLM preserves open space by managing the public lands for multiple uses, including outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, and mining, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources found on the public lands.

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